5: Amer. Russ. Inst. (no date) 1950 RF1 Great Russia RF1

C O N S T I T U T I O N

(Fundamental Law)

of the

RUSSIAN

SOVIET FEDERATED

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

of January 21, 1937

As amended through May 27, 1949

Chapter I. The Social Structure

642 Art. 1. The Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic is a socialist State of workers and peasants.

Art. 2. The political foundation of the Russian SFSR is the Soviets of Working People's Deputies, which grew and became strong as a result of the overthrow of the power of the landlords and capitalists and the conquest of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Art. 3. In the Russian SFSR all power belongs to the working people of town and country as represented by the Soviets of Working People's Deputies.

471 Art. 4. The economic foundation of the Russian SFSR is the socialist system of economy and the socialist ownership of the means and instruments of production established as the result of the liquidation of the capitalist system of economy, the abolition of private ownership of the means and instruments of production and the elimination of the exploitation of man by man.

421 Art. 5. Socialist property in the Russian SFSR exists either in the form of State property (the possession of the whole people), or in the form of co-operative and collective farm property (the possession of collective farms or co-operative associations).

[173] Art. 6. The land, its natural deposits, waters, forests, mills, factories, mines, rail, water and air transport, banks, communications, large state-organized agricultural enterprises (State farms, machine and tractor stations and the like), as well as municipal enterprises and the bulk of dwelling houses in the cities and industrial localities, are state property, that is belong to the whole people.

421 474 Art. 7. The common enterprises of collective farms and co-operative organizations with their livestock and implements, and the products of the collective farms and co-operative organizations, as well as their common buildings, constitute the common socialist property of collective farms and co-operative organizations.

In addition to its basic income from the common collective farm enterprise, [172] every household in a collective farm has for its personal use a small plot of household land and, as its personal property, a subsidiary husbandry on the plot, a dwelling house, livestock, poultry and minor agricultural implements — in accordance with the regulations of the agricultural artel.

[423] Art. 8. The land occupied by collective farms is secured to them free of charge and for an unlimited time, that is, in perpetuity.

471 Art. 9. Alongside the socialist system of economy in the Russian SFSR the law permits the private economy of individual peasants and artisans based on their own work and precluding the exploitation of the labour of others.

421 Art. 10. The right of citizens to personal ownership of their incomes from work and of their savings, of their dwelling houses and subsidiary household economy, their household furniture and utensils, articles of personal use and convenience, as well as the right of inheritance of personal property of citizens, is protected by law.

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of strata, whose interests were often conflicting. There were the *obshchiniki* (the communal landholders), the *otrubniki* (the peasant private property owners), the *khutoriane* (isolated homestead owners), the *bednyaki* (the poor and indebted peasants), the *serednyaki* (the middle peasants), and the *kulaki*. Finally, there were still the pomeshchiki who owned manorial estates with arable lands, timber-forests and pasture grounds. These were, however, gradually selling their land to the better-off peasants.

The peasant private landholders prospered better than those in the communes. The yield per acre on communal lands has always been much lower than on the private lands. The communal landholders had to rely for a part of their income on wages. These they got as seasonal industrial workers or as agricultural laborers on the lands of the landed gentry. They also worked on the lands of better-off individual peasant property owners whom they resented and called *"novye pomeshchiki"* (the new squires). The poor, landless, and indebted peasants antagonized the better-off peasants. The lower and the middle peasants resented the kulaks and the pomeshchiki.

At the same time the individualization of the Great-Russian peasantry was proceeding very slowly in spite of government help and encouragement. By 1912 the proportion of consolidated peasant holdings, as compared to those remaining in the communal system, was less than 11 percent. Between 1907 and 1915 only about 20 percent of the peasants left land commune.[16] This slow decommunalization did not, however, indicate lack of desire for private land ownership. The reasons for the persistence of the old communal land system lay in the shortage of land, in peasant poverty, in vested interests within the village commune, and finally in traditional lack of self-reliance among the peasants.

As long as a large part of the Great-Russian peasantry remained in the system of communal landholding where lack of initiative and primitive techniques of cultivation prevailed, no great general improvement in land cultivation and in the standard of living of the peasantry could have been expected in spite of all government efforts. Thus, economically insecure and

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of foreign loans and investments the process of industrialization and of economic autarchy, which was needed to develop military potential necessary to withstand internal and external threats, was proceeding at too slow a pace. This situation made it imperative for the impatient and insecure ruling class to have at hand goods available for quick export in order to buy foreign machinery and to industrialize and militarize the country at a higher speed.

The peasants in the meantime were busy in making improvements on their possessions and in raising the amount of food for home consumption. Increased peasant consumption of food however meant decrease of the crops available both for export and for the needs of fast growing urban strata which were being created as a result of a speedy industrialization. Also lack of regulation of agricultural production meant that planting and sowing were designed to a large extent to satisfy the home needs of the peasant, and only to a lesser extent those of the national or foreign market.

This meant that as long as a large section of the peasantry remained as independent producers there was always a danger that the ruling class might not have at its disposal sufficient quantities of marketable products. And the more the ruling faction felt insecure in its power, the more this potential threat of an economically independent peasantry seemed real and close. This feeling of insecurity and mistrust of the Bolsheviks was manifested in their hatred of the peasantry. "The peasant who has two cows is already an enemy," they would say. Hence the Party hierarchy made the decision not only to abolish the economic independence of the peasants, but also to "destroy peasantry as a class" by means of collectivization.

In their determination to "destroy peasantry as a class," the Bolsheviks first incited the poor and the medium peasants against the "kulaks" and then the landless against the small peasant owners. The Bolshevik agitators took advantage also of the traditional tensions within peasant families and aroused son against father and brother against brother. Thus inciting and exploiting resentments and hostilities between various peasant strata and taking advantage of family antagonisms, the Bolsheviks were able

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to force the peasants to join the collectives and the state farms. Those who opposed such policies were resettled or banished to convict labor camps. Many were massacred. According to Stalin ten million peasants became victims of this "class war."[5]

In order to insure their complete control over the farming population, the Bolshevik leaders sent the most trusted Party people from the city to the village to manage the newly formed *kolhozes*. These *novye bary* (new lords), as the peasants called them, installed themselves in the mansions of former estate owners and kept themselves at a considerable distance from the rural population, not unlike the former serf-owners. And not unlike the former gentry the new masters were also bent upon extracting maximum labor from the peasantry with minimum reward.

Under such conditions, the peasants, in the first outbursts of their reaction against this state of abusive submission resorted to outward aggression in the form of traditional uprisings. They burnt their crops and slaughtered their cattle rather than collectivize them. It is estimated that almost two-thirds of the entire livestock and a large part of the crops were destroyed.[6] Such a situation affected even the Ukraine, the "granary of Russia" and greatly contributed to the famine of 1932–33 in which hundreds of thousands of people died of starvation and epidemics. It was by such active rebellion that the peasantry forced the Party into a temporary retreat. The Party had to appease the peasants by giving each peasant household the right to retain in private use a small plot of land, and also in private possession a limited number of livestock. Also, private trade in agricultural products was restored in a limited degree.[7]

These were however only temporary concessions, since the Bolsheviks were determined to completely "industrialize" the peasantry as a means of political and economic control. Following such aims the highest possible degree of specialization in farm operation has been fostered and the members of the same family have been assigned to different, spacially separated activities. In this manner the agricultural brigade instead of the peasant family became the basic unit of agricultural production. For the same reason the highest possible degree of mechanization of